DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 184 247 EA 012 569

AUTHOR Cochran, Judith
TITLE When the Principal Is a Woman.
PUB DATE 80
NOTE 7p.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Elementary Secondary Education: *Employed Women; Females; Literature Reviews; *Principals

ABSTRACT

Myths surrounding the effectiveness of women principals abound. This paper dispels some of those myths by citing studies that show (1) teacher morale in schools with women principals is either equal to or higher than that in schools with male principals, (2) women principals are more effective at resolving conflicts with staff members, (3) teachers believe there is no difference in the leadership abilities of men and women principals, (4) women principals more often bring about productive behavior on the part of their teachers, and (5) women principals speak and act more often as representatives of the group. The paper concludes that most anxieties associated with the myths can be dissipated by careful selection and preparation of women principals. (Author/LD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED184247

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

When the Principal is a Woman

Judith Cochran

Scene: The boys gymnasium at a local high school. Five coaches and two male teachers are bemoaning the news they have just heard - that a woman has been named principal. They take a vote on three courses of action: Mass resignation, passive resistance or full cooperation. "We would never have a woman as principal," they agree.

Scene: The school janitor is going over the next days assembly schedule with the principal. She tells him to obtain hand microphones so that the presenter can draw comments from the student audience. "You push me around just like my mother," he retorts. The next day the hand mikes are missing and the janitor reports late for work.

Scene: A faculty meeting where curriculum reorganizing is being discussed. The faculty representative is making a presentation but the principal keeps interrupting, finishing his sentences and adding her chattery spiel. "Does she ever let him speak for himself," a new faculty member asks another male teacher.

Scene: The principal's office in a small rural high school. The principal is telling a teacher that shirt and jeans he are wearing

EA 012 569

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

J. Cochran

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

is inappropriate for teaching. "When my boss wears a tie, I'll wear a tie," he replies in a surly tone. The next morning, the principal appears with a bow tie at the neckline of her blouse.

Scenes, scenes. These scenes have never occurred for male or female principals but many fear they would take place if a woman became principal. It seems reasonable that she would have problems enforcing faculty discipline, supervising men and what's worse, she wouldn't know when to keep her mouth shut.

Interestingly enough, these scenes have not been substantiated in observation of females at work. The issue seems to be whether women can be adequate supervisors. The best evaluations of female principals have been conducted on the small but increasing number of women administrators. Multiple studies have indicated the following trends when female administrators are present.

1) Teacher morale in schools with women principals is either equal to (Gross and Trask, 1965; Kobayashi, 1974) or higher than (Hines and Grobman, 1956) in schools with male principals.
2) Women principals are more effective at resolving conflicts with staff members (Morsink, 1968).
3) Teachers believe there is no difference in the leadership abilities of men and women principals (Barter, 1959; Henschel, 1964; Cobbley, 1970; Longstreth, 1973; Linton, 1974). (An

opposite result was found by Milanovich, 1966).

4) Women principals emphasize and bring about a greater amount of productive behavior on the part of their teachers (Wiles and Grobman, 1955; Hines and Grobman, 1956; Morsink, 1968; Spence, 1971; Kobayashi, 1974).

5) Women principals speak and act more often as representatives of the group (Morsink, 1968).

If some of these findings do not seem accurate, one should consider whether distrust is based on fantasy or fact. Reluctance toward hiring female principals has been demonstrated in both the research (Warwick, 1967; Taylor, 1971; Matheny, 1973) and in statistics. Proportionally, it is difficult to explain how 49% of high school faculties are female and yet only 1% of the high school principals are female. Further, increasing numbers of graduates in administration programs are female (Chronical of Higher Education, 1979). Both the proportion of available females and the increase in certified applicants does not indicate a lack of administrative interest on the womens part.

The problem is a difficult one. Employees are hired upon projected performance. When women are viewed against perceptual framework of male competency, there is little hope of a projected image of the female replacing the male (Bartlett and Barnes, 1979). For indeed, as the research indicates, female administrators bring with them their own competencies of group supportiveness and

and encouragement of productivity from their faculties. There is no question of lowered staff morale or inadequate leadership when a woman is principal. The only question is how to combat the myths that prevent women to contribute to the educational system from administrative positions when they are not hired. The new principal rarely is a woman.

Regardless of the fears, real or imagined, most anxieties could be dissipated by careful selection and preparation of women principals. Most who apply for the position have administrative credentials, years of teaching experience and a high degree of self confidence as evidenced by their application. It would seem the worst obstacle for these women would be the reluctance of employers to hire her. When encountering projected fears even the most sterling record of past achievement has limited value.

B I B L I O G R A P H Y

Barter, A.S. "The status of women in school administration--where will they go from here?" Educational Horizons, 1959, 37, 72-75.

Bartlett and Barnes. "The Curricular Sexism of Search Committees." Psychology Today, February 1980, 104-105.

Cobbley, L. "A study of attitudes and opportunities for women in six western states to become elementary school principals." (Doctoral dissertation, Brigham Young University, 1970) Dissertation Abstracts International, 1971, 31, 4409A.

Gross, N. and Trask, A. Men and Women as Elementary Principals. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University, Graduate School of Education, 1965.

Henschel, B.J.S. "A comparison of the personality variables of women administrators and women teachers in education." (Doctoral dissertation, University of Utah, 1964) Dissertation Abstracts, 1965, 25, 6313A.

Hines, V. and Grobman, H. "The weaker sex is losing out." School Board Journal, 1956, 132, 100, 102.

Kobayashi, K. "A comparison of organizational climate of schools administered by female and male elementary school principals." (Doctoral dissertation, University of the Pacific, 1974) Dissertation Abstracts International, 1974, 35, 129-30A.

Linton, D.L. "Teachers' perceptions of women as principals in an elementary school district." (Doctoral dissertation, United States International University, 1974) Dissertation Abstracts International, 1974, 35, 1354A.

Longstreth, C.A. "An analysis of the perceptions of the leadership behavior of male and female secondary school principals in Florida." (Doctoral dissertation, University of Miami, 1973) Dissertation Abstracts International, 1973, 34, 2224-25A.

Matheny, P.H.P. "A study of the attitudes of selected male and female teachers, administrators and board of education presidents toward women in educational administrative positions." (Doctoral dissertation, Northwestern University, 1973) Dissertation Abstracts International, 1973, 34, 2976A.

Milanovich, A. "Gentlemen before ladies?" New York State Education, 1966, 54, 18-19.

Morsink. H. "Leader behavior of men and women secondary school principals." Educational Horizons, 1968-69, 69-74.

Spence, B.A. "Sex of teachers as a factor in their perception of selected leadership characteristics of male and female elementary school principals." (Doctoral dissertation, Purdue University, 1971) Dissertation Abstracts International, 1971, 32, 2985A.

Taylor, S.S. "The attitudes of superintendents and board of education members in Connecticut toward the employment and effectiveness of women as public school administrators. (Doctoral dissertation, University of Connecticut, 1971) In J. Pottker and A. Fishel (Eds.), Sex bias in the schools: The research evidence. Teaneck. N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1975.

Warwick, E.B. "Attitudes toward women in administrative positions as related to curricular implementation and change." (Doctoral dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1967) Dissertation Abstracts, 1967, 28, 1256-57A.

Wiles, K. and Grobman, H.G. "Principals as leaders." Nation's Schools, 1955, 56, 75-77